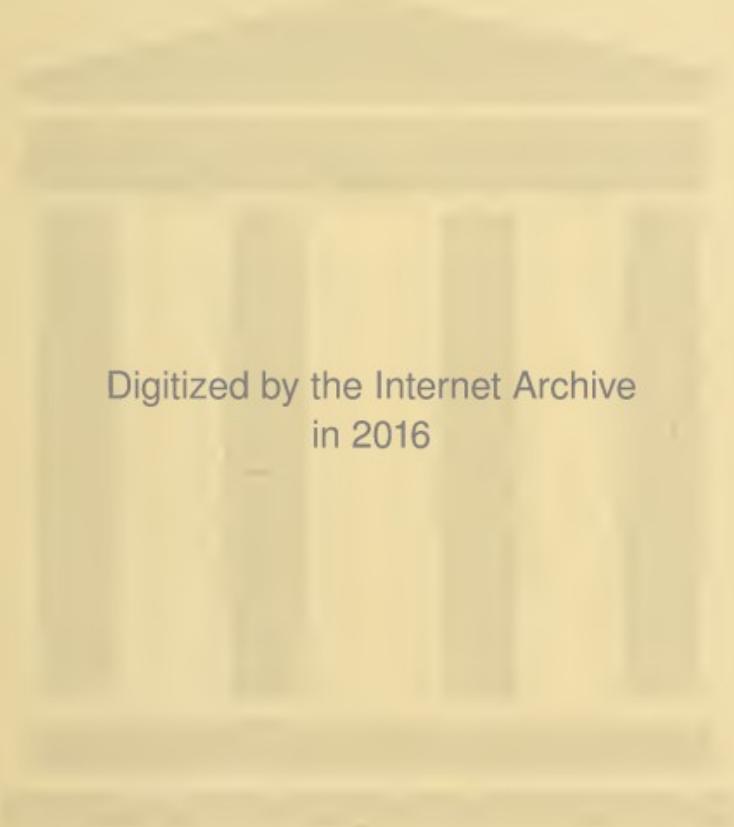


THE  
LAMP OF THE  
SANCTUARY

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1883

Rev. T. J. Woods

Rev. T. J. Woods



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THE LAMP  
OF  
THE SANCTUARY.

A TALE.

BY HIS EMINENCE  
CARDINAL WISEMAN.



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO :  
BENZIGER BROTHERS,  
*Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.*

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*IN THE SAME SERIES.*

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THE  
LAMP OF THE SANCTUARY.

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CHAPTER I.

ITS BRIGHTNESS.

*“Who will grant me that I might be according to the days in which God kept me, when His lamp shined over my head?”—Job xxix. 2, 3.*

IN the recesses of the Pyrenees, not far from the Spanish border, there was (our tale is of the last century) a small rural chapel situated on a hill known by the name of Mont-Marie. The chapel itself was simple and unpretending, solidly built, and of considerable antiquity. The inside was, however, richly adorned. The altar had silver furniture, and the walls round it were covered with votive

tablets and with silver donatives hung in commemoration of favors piously believed to have been received through the intercession of the blessed Mother of God, to whom the chapel was dedicated. Indeed it was celebrated through the neighboring country for miles round as a place of great devotion, almost a pilgrimage. Over, but behind the altar, on which was a rich tabernacle, stood an image of the spotless Virgin, bearing in her arms her divine Son. It was nearly as large as life, of white marble and of ancient workmanship. Every one who looked at it with a favorable light pronounced it a matchless piece of art, a work of highest inspiration. Nothing could be more benign, more sweet, than the expression of the Mother; nothing more winning yet more majestic, than the countenance of the Child.

In the midst of the sanctuary, before the altar, was hung a silver lamp, as is usual in Catholic churches and oratories, burning day and night. Never, on the most tempestuous night, was it

known to be extinguished ; for it was abundantly supplied, by the piety of the people, with the purest oil from the olive-yards of the country. And this to many of them was a matter of great importance ; for that lamp was a beacon and a sure guide to the traveller at night. It was, therefore, so hung that its bright radiance shone through a round window over the door, and could be seen to a great distance. The path which led from several hamlets to the main-road in the valley, passed near this chapel. It was a narrow, rugged track along the mountain's side, skirting a precipice ; and the directions given to the traveller were to go boldly forward so long as the light of the chapel was visible before him, but so soon as it disappeared by a jutting of the rock, to turn sharp to the right and fearlessly descend, as the precipice was now exchanged for a gentle slope that led to the wider road. So certain was this rule, that no accident was remembered to have ever happened along that path. Thus

did a beautiful symbolical rite of worship lend itself to a most beneficial purpose, and become the cause of great social good ; thus did the altar of God send abroad its cheerful brightness to light up the dark and wearisome path (alas ! how like that of life !) and thus were the solitary traveller's thoughts attracted to the sphere where his guiding-star burned clear before the mercy-throne of the Lamb, there to offer, in spirit, homage ; or led to think on that wakeful eye of Providence which darts its ray from a higher sanctuary upon our joyless way, to cheer and guide us thither.

The chapel was under the care of a hermit priest, who lived in an humble dwelling beside it, and ministered to the spiritual wants of the neighborhood, as the parish church was at some distance.

On the road which we have described, and about two miles from the chapel, was a poor, small mountain hamlet, inhabited chiefly by woodmen who worked in the forests around. Among the cottages which composed it, one was re-

markable for its neatness, though as poor as the rest; and the young couple that occupied it were no less distinguished than the most industrious, the most virtuous, and the happiest in the place. While Pierrot was sturdily working among the hills, his wife Annette was sitting at her wheel spinning incessantly, unless busied with domestic cares; while at her feet sat their only child, not yet three years old, but already giving tokens of great sense and virtue. Like every other child born under the tutelage of that chapel, she had been called at baptism, Marie. The child was the delight of her parents, for with great liveliness of disposition and cheerfulness she united sweetness of temper and gentleness of mind. It may be easily imagined how they watched her every look with the anxiety of fond affection.

It was with dismay, therefore, that about this time each parent observed a notable falling off in her good looks and in her spirits. For some days, neither durst speak on the subject to the other;

but at last it became manifestly necessary to call in medical advice, for the child was growing every day paler and thinner, and was losing strength. But every effort of human skill proved vain, and the physician declared that nothing short of a miracle could save the child. The parents were disconsolate, and seemed distracted with their grief ; till, finding no comfort on earth, they turned their thoughts more fervently to Heaven, where, however, they had all along sought help.

It was a fine autumn evening when the heart-broken parents were seen slowly walking along the narrow path we have described, evidently directing their steps towards Mont-Marie. The mother bore a precious burden in her arms, lighter indeed than the one she carried in her heart. It was her frail and sickly child, carefully wrapped up, though the afternoon was warm.

When they reached the ~~chapel~~ it was still day, and many of the peasants were there making their evening visit as

they returned from work. The door was open, and the western sun streamed in full glory through it, and steeped the interior of the place with a golden lustre, giving to the paintings and hangings and the bright ornaments of the altar a richness and magnificence truly royal. It seemed as if it was the hour of majesty, the time for urging great and noble suits at the throne of Power ; the presence-chamber of the King of kings seemed gorgeously arrayed to hear the song of the joyful heart, and to dispense the treasures of redundant blessings. And each and every one of those peasants, kneeling in scattered groups in fervent worship, scarcely able to bear the dazzling sparks of light which the sunbeams struck from the silver tabernacle, was in that moment ennobled and graced beyond the richest and proudest of earth's lords. Their rustic costume was embroidered by the golden pencil of Heaven, their honest heads surrounded, and in a manner crowned, by a flood of glory, and their countenances upturned

with glowing features and moistened eyes towards that Presence before which all earthly royalty is base. And now the organ pealed forth its powerful notes, and all united in a simple but overpowering strain of evening thanksgiving.

It was at this moment that Pierrot and his wife reached the threshold of the door; and both instinctively paused as if unable to enter in. That sparkling light, that golden atmosphere, those joyful looks, those swelling notes, accorded not with their errand, sympathized not with their hearts, jarred, broken, fretted as they were. They were not coming to urge high and peculiar claims, but to seek pity, mercy, and peace. In a moment, however, they both felt confused at their apparent want of confidence, and, assuming boldly the privilege ever granted by Catholic feeling to the distressed, advanced to the steps leading to the sanctuary. On these the mother laid her helpless burden; and both, kneeling down, covered their streaming

eyes from the overpowering, though fading, splendor that oppressed them. Long, deep, and breathless was their prayer. During it the music had ceased, the peasants had one by one glided out, and the hermit, having closed the door, and with it shut out the last dying reflection of the western sky, whispered to the afflicted father as he retired, "I have left the door unlocked, stay as long as you please. Have courage, and may God comfort you, and, through the intercession of His blessed Mother, hear your prayers." He was not like Heli, that good hermit who chid Anna in the Temple because of her troubled supplication.

At these words, both uncovered their faces and raised their eyes. They were alone with their child : a perfect silence reigned around them. There was no light but what was shed by the lamp of the sanctuary between them and the altar. Hanging in mid-air, this seemed as a silver fountain of mildest radiance, not shot forth in rays, not scattered

abroad in fiery sparks, not playing wantonly in unsteady flame, but softly and equably diffused from its source on every side, filling the centre of the holy place with a halo of serenest, purest light, and thence overflowing in a more subdued and blander stream into the remoter part and angles of the roof and walls. It was a light that appeared to exert a stilling, hushing power on nature ; one could not conceive noise or disturbance going on under it ; a laugh, a harsh word, an angry murmur would have sounded sacrilegious, if they could have been possibly attempted. It created an atmosphere of its own ; as though that soft attempered light diffused a corresponding warmth through the air, which the frost without could not chill ; for no one could feel cold beneath its genial glow. It gave a softness and beauty to the commonest objects ; the rude memorials of benefits received that hung around, and the poor paintings which adorned the upper parts of the walls, had their imperfect details concealed, and

their more prominent features brought out in a subdued tone, that made them look like masterpieces of art; and countenances which by day looked stern, by this mild light were gentle and engaging. But it was on the inward feelings that its kindest influence was shed. It seemed to kindle in the breast a holy light like unto itself, beaming serene and soothing over its disturbed affections, subduing pride and loftiness of spirit, calming anger, engentling austerity, and smoothing the folds of the crafty thought. It unruffled, it mellowed, it melted the soul, and fitted it for tender and gentle emotions.

And when, thus feeling all without them in perfect harmony with their own thoughts, the unhappy parents raised their eyes towards the image of their Redeemer and His Mother, the full radiance of that lamp upon it revealed features so full of love and compassion, that never did this representation of them appear so lovely or so truly a portrait of what in their hearts

they now wished to find them both. For they felt that *this* was the hour for appeals for mercy and pity on distress ; here was the inner audience-chamber, where the petition of the poor would be kindly received face to face, whispered into the ear.

Long and fervently did the parents pray over their child under the solemn inspiration of the place and hour. There was more of depth in the father's fervor, more of tenderness in the mother's ; but both made together a joint petition, they offered up a common vow. If the child recovered, she was for the next seven years to be clothed in white, as an emblem of dedication to the purest of maids, brought up ever in piety and devotion ; and her parents would fast once a week during the same period.

“ Yes,” exclaimed Pierrot, in the simple poetry of nature, “ she shall be white and pure as the lily, whose root has been fed by the mountain snow ; she shall be as a flower before the altar of

God. She shall shine in His sanctuary as the lamp that now hangs over her; her virtues shall shed a mild lustre through the holy place, as she kneels in conscious gratitude, where now she lies. Extinguish not the light of our eyes! and let not death presume to touch her now consecrated to Thee, any more than a sacrilegious hand will ever dare to quench this holy flame that burns before Thine altar!"

While the parents were engaged in prayer, their child seemed to be enjoying a slumber calmer and healthier than she had done for several weeks; and in this they saw the first symptom of recovery. It was late when they returned home, but the child still slept; and next morning she was evidently better. In a few more days she was at her usual place by her mother's knee. She was now, what is called in France, *vouée au blanc*, clothed entirely, according to vow, in virgin white. And as she grew from day to day in sense and virtue, so was she looked upon by all the good people

in the neighborhood as one dedicated to God and privileged by grace. Hence, by common accord, the place of honor seemed granted to her in church, the spot in the centre on which she had been laid in her sickness.

There, as she grew older, she would kneel immovable for hours, and when at dusk the crowds of peasants who filled the oratory, in the dark costume of the country, formed a confused mass, her form, arrayed in dazzling white, in the full radiance of the mystic lamp, shone bright and clear as if fulfilling her father's prayer, and seemed itself to shed a light upon the darker objects around. In the silent meditation and fervent prayer in the soft glow of that sacred lamp, her heart, too, found delight. The glories of the evening sun, the clear splendor of the summer noon, had no charms for her, like to its milder ray. It seemed to her to shed around a light so chaste and pure as could brook thoughts none but the holiest and most angelic ; nor could words, save the most

warm and tender, bear to be breathed therein. Heavenly spirits seemed to bask in it, and cherubs were playing on the cloud of glory that hung around the flame. Nor was it to her eyes alone that this mysterious and symbolical light appeared so beautiful. With it there seemed to come music to her ears, voices whispering prayer in accordance with hers, songs subdued and tender, as of spirits striking softly upon golden harps.

And it seemed to scatter ever the sweetest fragrance, a balm, an incense pure from every gross and earthly particle. In short, no place to her appeared more closely allied to Heaven, and no situation raised her on wings of holy desire so gently from earth, as did that lonely sanctuary, enjoyed in the light of its own dear star.

It has been observed that persons living much together come to contract a certain resemblance to one another, so as to be often taken for near relations; and so did many think that by frequent and long kneeling before that

beautiful image of the spotless Virgin Mother, with gaze intent upon it in that mild light, her features gradually moulded themselves into the same meek and modest expression, as though she were the living, as that was the lifeless, portrait of the same original.

## CHAPTER II.

### ITS DARKENING.

*“ May the counsel of the wicked be far from me. How often shall the lamp of the wicked be put out, and a deluge come upon them, and He shall distribute the sorrows of His wrath.”—Job xxi. 17.*

NEARLY six years had now passed over since the vow was spoken ; and they had been years all of joy and happiness : when a change came over the household of Pierrot, which blighted it sadly, and brought with it sorrow and woe.

A little before this time, two strange men came with their families to settle in the neighborhood. They were a rough set, and no one knew anything about them.

They took a piece of land at some distance from any other dwelling and built themselves large huts of timber,

much like those of others ; but while they were working at them, they seemed jealous of any one's coming to look at them : and when they were finished they never invited any one inside. The men did not seem to have any particular occupation, and the women were idle and slovenly ; yet they always seemed to be better off than their neighbors, and on Sundays made a very dashing appearance. Nobody knew what to make of them, but it was clear there was some mystery about them.

A few months after they had settled there a sensible alteration in the character of Pierrot was observable by his wife and daughter. He went to his work with less cheerfulness, and got apparently through much less of it, for his earnings clearly fell off. He was thoughtful and reserved, almost moody, and for the first time had evidently a painful secret which he concealed from his family. Instead of returning home as soon as his work was done to enjoy their society, they would have to wait for him

some hours in silent grief ; and when he did come in he was cold and silent, and made some poor excuse for his lateness. At length one day when he went to work, he said to his wife : “ Annette, I shall probably not return till very late to-night—so don’t sit up for me. I have important business which may even detain me all night.” He gave no time for any remonstrance, but hurried forth. Oh, what a sorrowful day was that for mother and daughter ! they scarcely spoke all day, and each tried to hide her tears from the other; for the child, though only eight years of age, had sense enough to know that things were going fearfully wrong. Towards evening, therefore, both, guided by the same impulse, took the road to Mont-Marie, to pour forth their grief and seek consolation at the foot of the altar. There Marie knelt in her usual place behind the lamp ; she raised her eyes and her heart, and was soon absorbed in meditation. And her meditation was this :

She thought of the desolate home which

awaited the blessed Mother of Our Lord as she descended from Calvary—the joyless board, the cheerless chamber, the restless couch, prepared for her after a day of anguish and of blight. There, comparing sorrow with sorrow, how trifling appeared her own afflictions beside hers ! There, eyes that fall on garments sprinkled from the wine-press, trodden that day, of God's justice ; there, ears that yet ring with the clang of the hammer, forcing nails through the quivering flesh ; there, a heart pierced through with a sword of grief, planting to its core with the keenest of material sorrows ; there, body and soul staggering under a weight of anguish that would have crushed a frame of iron and a mind of adamant, but can be borne up by her unresisting patience. And in the thought of such an ocean of sorrows, how small a drop did those appear to that child of grace, which the heavenly Father had allotted her ! And now, after each kind friend that has accompanied this sovereign Lady to her humble abode has de-

parted, she sees her left at last alone in the silence of the night, with the lamp (fed perhaps from the Garden of Gethsemani) beaming upon her pale countenance, on which that day has written more of woe than years had traced before, glittering in tear after tear, as it trickles from her dim celestial eyes, watching alone beside her, sole thing that cheers and sheds a ray of comfort through the dreary chamber and the drearier heart. And, in her childish thoughts, she blessed that pale and trembling light which then gave Mary comfort, and felt as though the little flame above her, shining now upon her and upon the sacred representation of that Queen of sorrows before her, were the faithful representative and descendant of that which then lighted up and cheered her sanctuary and home. Its calm twilight thus exercised its soothing influence on the innocent child's spirit, and associated her afflictions with the holiest that earth had ever witnessed. She felt as though she suffered in com-

pany with the noblest and blessedest among women, and the total darkness which had before overspread her soul was lighted up by a cheering ray, mild, serene, and pure, as that which tempered the shadows of night within that sanctuary. She felt that she could return to her desolate home with resignation at least, after what she had contemplated.

But before she rose from prayer, she had made an offering to the Almighty, through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, which she did not tell to her mother for some time after. She felt as though it was accepted, and she was comforted.

Let it not be thought that we have described conduct or feelings beyond the age of such a child. In the world we ordinarily have no idea of the maturity of grace to which children, brought up under the Church's wings, are sometimes brought by Him who "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings bringeth forth perfect praise." We hear often among us of precocious talent, seldom of precocious virtue ; yet one is as nat-

ural in its own order as the other. But not only do the lives of saints, as those of St. Rose of Lima, St. Mary Magde-lén di Pazzi, St. Catharine of Sienna, present us with instances of intelligence and spiritual illumination in even an earlier age, but at this day are yet such examples to be found, and that within the compass of our own knowledge. And if parents, mothers in particular, knew how to train their children from the cradle for God ; if instead of fondling their infant humors, and caressing their very passions and caprices, they turned the first dawn of their reason to the knowlege and consideration of the Divine Goodness, and shaped their lips to utter as first sounds the two sweetest names in human speech, many who now have to weep over the follies and vices of their offspring might be thanking God instead for having blessed their family with a saint.

But to proceed. When the mother and daughter returned home, they were far better able to encounter the melan-

choly of their cottage than when they left it ; nor did its gloom appear so deep, especially to the latter. She seemed almost cheerful, as she bid her mother put her trust in God and in the intercession of His blessed Mother. It was late next morning when Pierrot suddenly entered, with a pale and haggard look ; he cast a purse upon the table at which his wife and daughter were sitting, and hurried, without uttering a word, into his bedroom. They both gazed long in silent amazement at the unwonted sight ; and when Pierrot, after a few hours' troubled rest, came back, he was surprised and mortified at finding his purse lying untouched where he had thrown it.

“ What is the meaning of this ? ” he asked with some bitterness. “ Do you take that purse for some venomous animal, that you have been afraid to touch it ? ”

“ Pierrot,” answered his wife, “ how is it come by ? ”

“ Honestly, I assure you,” he replied.

“ You do not, I hope, think me capable of theft or robbery ? ”

“ God forbid ! ” rejoined his wife, “ but you have done very little work of late ; and it would take long in your craft, even with great industry, to amass such a sum. A purseful like that, got in one night, looks, you will own, to say the least, suspicious.”

“ Then make yourselves easy,” said Pierrot, “ it is honestly come by. I have fallen in with acquaintances who have put me into the way of a successful commercial speculation ; and these I hope are only its first fruits.”

The poor woman was glad to receive the comforts of his words. But though she looked contented and put up the purse, she could not bring herself to use its contents. She redoubled her industry, and wore herself to death at her wheel, to keep up appearances and guard off famine ; but neither she nor her daughter would touch the suspicious gold. And often would Pierrot bring more, after having been out a night,

and sometimes two and the intervening day ; yet the store remained untouched. For one sign was in their eyes decisive. Pierrot was no longer the same. He neglected every religious duty, was seldom seen at church except on Sunday, and then seemed to have no pleasure in its duties.

Once it happened that his little daughter enticed him in the afternoon to Mont-Marie, where, taking her usual place she prayed earnestly for him and renewed the offering of herself before alluded to ; she prolonged her prayer beyond dusk by the favorite light of the sanctuary lamp ; but on rising from her knees she found her father gone. He was waiting outside, and on her affectionately remonstrating with him on his impatience on leaving the church he replied :

“ For my part I wonder how you can stay so long, and pray by that dim and dismal light. By it the church looked to me like a dark sepulchral vault so gloomy and oppressive. The pictures on the

walls stared at me like so many ghosts, or appeared to frown upon me. It made even the image of the Blessed Virgin look cold and stern. I could not stand it, and came out to breathe a mouthful of fresh air."

The child sighed, and said, "Ah ! dearest father, you used not to speak so. There must be something amiss in that breast that loves not, or dares not, to pray by the still light of the sanctuary lamp !"

Pierrot walked home in silence, and for some weeks was more steady at his work. But he soon relapsed into his former habits, and even extended his absence from home to longer periods—to weeks instead of days. It is time, however, that we explain the cause of this unhappy change. The new-comers to his neighborhood, whom we have mentioned, belonged to a rough and unprincipled class that hang (especially in mountain districts) about the frontiers of foreign countries. They were contrabandists or smugglers, who contracted for a certain

profit to carry French goods over the Spanish border without paying duty ; and this was often done by large parties on a great scale in spite of the vigilance of revenue officers, whom they did not scruple to attack and fight in case of surprise. These two men and their families were old offenders and experienced hands. Being too well known at their former station, and having observed in the neighborhood of Mont-Marie passes comparatively but slightly guarded in consequence of the honesty of the peasantry, they had determined to turn the circumstance to their advantage, and came to settle in that neighborhood. But to succeed, they saw it was necessary to get some one to join them who was well acquainted with every nook and track among the crags and mountains ; and, having taken some time to pick up acquaintance with the characters of their neighbors, they fixed upon poor Pierrot as their victim, not only because he was an expert mountaineer, but because his very gentleness of character, the result

of his virtue, would enable them, could they but once corrupt him, to keep him more completely under their power than one of rougher and sterner cast.

They began, therefore, artfully to insinuate themselves into his familiarity and friendship by expressing an interest in him and his family and their pity at seeing him toiling all day for a paltry pittance, when by commercial undertakings, sure of success, he could soon put himself in far better circumstances. Pierrot listened at first with indifference, and then with curiosity, which soon grew up into eagerness, to their tempting suggestions. At length they unfolded their schemes more openly, and he was startled. But for this they were prepared; and after the first shock was over, they began to remove his scruples. They told him speciously that they were French subjects, and consequently not bound by the Spanish laws, which alone forbade the introduction of goods across the boundary; that, consequently, with them this could not be wrong, but was

merely a commercial speculation attended with risk of seizure, just like a venture in time of war, or a ship's freight sent through the boisterous ocean in winter.

Pierrot was at last engaged to join in one of their expeditions; they took care that it should be a safe, easy, and pleasant one; and he received as his share of profit the purse which he threw on the table of his cottage. Although his conscience was ill at ease, the love of money had now struck root in his heart, and he was soon so surrounded with the toils of his artful seducers that he had no longer strength to disentangle himself or to break through them. Such is the history of many a good but weak mind that has but listened to the arts of a deceiver. Its very goodness makes it an unequal match for well-trained cunning and daring profligacy. After its first fall its powers are broken, and it allows itself to be led by the will of its ensnarer.

After Pierrot's visit, described above,

to the sanctuary of Mont-Marie, his companions, afraid of his escape from them, and of his betraying them, determined to involve him still deeper in crime. First, when they had again prevailed on him to join them, they took him upon a more venturesome expedition, which, as they had foreseen, led to an encounter with the revenue-guard ; shots were fired, blows were struck, and the pass was forced by sheer violence. A few days after placards were posted in all the neighboring villages offering rewards for the discovery of the offenders, with free pardon to accomplices who should betray them. Pierrot's tyrants next showed him these, and threatened, on his first attempt to dispute their will, to carry him over the frontier, and deliver him to the authorities.

He was now their victim, their tool in any wicked enterprise. He had no longer a will of his own ; he seemed to have surrendered his very soul into their hands, and there was no extent of crime (short of murder) to which they did not

lead him at their pleasure. They had at last ventured to unveil to him their real characters as outlaws and banditti. They made him join them in their midnight robberies; but he sickened at the very thought of polluting his once happy dwelling with the fruit of his villainies; he refused a share in the spoils, and whenever he returned home, it was only with more haggard looks, more tortured conscience, and an empty purse.

He loathed his very life, he gnawed his heart in sorrow, and the most desperate thought, even of self-destruction, began to haunt his mind. His companions saw him sometimes looking over the edge of a precipice, as if deliberating whether to throw himself headlong, or feeling the point of a dagger, as if meditating a self-aimed blow. But a cold shudder would creep over his frame; he would draw suddenly back, or cast the weapon away: while his companions would break into a coarse, unfeeling peal of laughter, and dare him to accomplish his thought. Yes! thanks to heaven,

Pierrot had not yet lost his belief in eternity ; he remembered that there was a bottomless gulf below the depths of the precipice, and that there was a sword of Divine Justice there keener than the dagger's point.

But his companions saw that they would soon lose their hold on him, that his desperation would drive him to some deed that would betray them. They, therefore, with artful villainy changed their course. They assured him of their willingness to release him from his painful life. One, only one more enterprise did they require him to join : it was an easy and safe one ; and after that they would quit the neighborhood, and he should be left in peace. In peace ! Little did they know or care how effectually they had driven this from his heart, how they had banished it from his life ! Still, to him there was comfort in their words ; and he almost longed to commit the crime which was to be his last. A day was fixed for it, yet a month off, and this seemed like an age to Pierrot. Nor

could any entreaties prevail on them to communicate to him the nature of their intention. Only he clearly saw preparations making at their houses for a complete and sudden flight ; and in this he felt he had the best pledge and security for the truth of their promises.

Let us, in the mean time, return to consider his poor wife and child. Every month of the period over which we have traced Pierrot's evil course had sunk them deeper in misery and in sorrow. Of the character of his crimes they had no evidence ; for, as he never brought home his share of plunder, and as he kept a moody silence and reserve, they had no ground on which to suspect farther than that he was engaged in something very wrong. Even when at home, he could get but little work, for now no one cared to employ him ; and so his once neat and happy dwelling bore marks of poverty, neglect, and decay. And within, too, all was sorrow and distress ; no cheerful conversation,

no smile, no confidence. The mother and the daughter, indeed, understood one another, but it was more by silent sympathy than by exchange of sentiment; for each feared ever to swell the other's grief, and generally stifled her inward feelings, and repressed the gushing tear, or wept alone. And let this be added to the praises of the poor, that none better than they have the inborn delicacy to honor virtue in distress, and refrain from sarcasm and reproach against those whom bitter trials oppress. Never was the conduct of Pierrot, though now notorious and a public scandal, cast into the face of these two forlorn ones, morally indeed a widow and an orphan. But rather it seemed as if a tacit honor was paid to their suffering innocence; every one made way for them; every one seemed to soften his voice as he addressed them; many a present, artfully conveyed so as to repress all sense of obligation, made its way to their cottage to soothe their distress; and many a kind hope that

God would console them was whispered at the church door in their ear.

And He did, in truth, console them ; for without His presence, His grace, His light, His Food, their hearts would long since have been broken by despairing sorrow. Again and again did they kneel at evening before the altar, and there ever found they the calm and peace which resignation to the Divine Will alone can give. It was on one of these occasions that a new association of ideas led our little contemplative to consoling thoughts, akin to those we have seen the sanctuary's lamp had before suggested ; only from the sorrows of the Mother it guided her to those of the Son. She had been reading in her little rude picture-Bible, and had there seen illustrated the vision of Zacharias (chap. iv.), in which is described the golden candle-stick before the altar, on either side whereof stands an olive-tree, the over-hanging branches of which, through golden funnels, feed the sacred lamps with an unfailing light and unction

(verse 12). To this her thoughts reverted as the soothing light of the lamp fell upon her; and, wearied much with sorrow, she fell into one of those calm moods of meditation in which the thoughts arise spontaneously and pass, as on a mirror, before the mind, seeming but the reflection of objects presented by an external, but invisible power. It appeared to her as though the lamp before the altar were enlarged in its dimensions, and became a golden font, in the midst of which burned a flame, celestial in its purity and its brightness; while over its edge flowed on every side a rich amber wave of purest oil, some of which was caught up by unseen hands in golden phials, and borne away as a precious treasure into the Church's stores; whence dispensed, in a triple stream, it hallowed the child, consecrated the high-priests of God, and anointed the dying wrestler against the powers of hell; while some fell in drops like balm upon her and others, and where it fell, closed a wound, or healed a sore, or soothed a

pain, or stilled a throb. It dropped upon her lips, and it was bitter with the bitterness of myrrh, but withal savory, and as a cordial to her breast. Then as she wondered whence came this marvellous overflow of abundance (like the filling of the widow of Sarepta's vessels), she saw above a branch of a dark and gloomy olive, which overhung it, and distilled into it, from its purple fruit, thick clammy drops of its healing juice. And when again she wondered whence this chosen plant derived its sacred sap, she looked naturally down towards its twisted roots, and there beheld One prostrate as in anguish and prayer. His face could not be seen, for His pale forehead touched the ground ; but His dark robe seemed as studded with princely gems—rubies or carbuncles of sparkling brightness. And by degrees these increased in size and began to flow, trickling, as a dew, upon that consecrated ground. For they were the first life-drops, earnest of a fuller flow, which burst through those pores, whence vir-

tue went out to heal all. By these was fed and enriched, while it was hallowed, that tree which first, after the deluge, put forth branches of promise of peace and of hope, and sent by the dove the first tidings of reconciliation to the world baptized. And hence the fruit of that tree was made the third in order of earth's most precious produce, joined ever to the "corn and the wine" in the threats and in the promises of prophecy,\* and forming with them the triple power, whereby men are multiplied and strengthened in sacramental life.†

To that youthful child's heart there seemed as clear connection between this consecration and its fruits, as there was between Our Lord's descent into the waters of Jordan, and the mystical sanctification of that cleansing element. The olive consecrated by the holy unction of our Redeemer's first blood, became to the

\* Deut. xi. 14; xxviii. 5; Jer. xxxi. 12; Os. ii. 8.

† Ps. iv. 8: "By the fruit of their corn, wine and oil, they have been multiplied."

Church a sacred tree, whose juice can soften, nourish, heal, render at once supple and strong, the soul sacramentally, as the body naturally, and alone is fit, with the produce of the industry of the virgin bee, to light up the sanctuary of God. These musings of the sorrowful child brought their consolation, by leading her thoughts to that scene of sorrow, in which even *agony* of mind may learn resignation. And this thought struck her: If in the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem it shall be said to holy virgins, spouses of the Lamb, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness," shall it not be said that here below there is *an oil of affliction* too, with which the servants of God are anointed, and rendered thereby no less pleasing? And happy the virgin who, waiting for her Bridegroom, has her lamp trimmed with this holy oil, aye, and plenty of it in her vessel too, lest it be extinguished. And if it fail her, oh! let her hasten in time thither, where best it can be found and procured, to the

Mount of Olives, the hill of unction and of light.

While the youthful contemplative was enjoying these thoughts, and praying that her lamp might be found burning whenever the summons should come, her mother touched her shoulder, and admonished her that it was time to return home. The visions of her childish imagination melted away, and she found herself once more, basking in the lustre of the sanctuary's lamp.

## CHAPTER III.

### ITS EXTINCTION.

*“The light shall be dark in His tabernacle, and the lamp that is over Him shall be put out.”—Job xviii.*

IT is a trite remark that as a lamp will shine the more brightly in proportion to the darkness which surrounds it, so will virtue appear more brilliant when the gloom of adversity has closed around it. Or, still drawing our illustration from our subject, we may say that as the lamps of Gideon’s soldiers did not show their dazzling brilliancy till the vessels of clay in which they were inclosed had been bruised, broken, and utterly crushed, so did the virtues of Pierrot’s wife and daughter break forth with increased lustre the more their poor humanity was bowed down, the more their bodies were wasted with want and their hearts

broken with affliction. Upon that of the daughter a new grief seemed now to have come ; but though it passed occasionally like a cloud over her brow, sufficiently distinct not to escape her watchful mother's eye, yet was it always succeeded immediately by a bright serenity, which clearly came not from earthly consolation. While they were sitting together at their work in silence, a sigh would escape her, a tear would steal down ; but the next instant her hands would drop upon her knees, her eyes and countenance would be upturned towards heaven, a bright smile would beam upon her features, and her lips would move as if addressing some one near. In those moments her mother ventured not to address her, but would gaze on her in admiration and awe, believing her to be in close communion with better spirits.

At length, one day she asked her what now so much occupied her thoughts. "I will conceal nothing from you, my dearest mother," replied the child ; "the

truth is, I can hardly bear to think that in a few days my term of consecration under your vow will expire, and that I must put off my white garment and resume that of the world."

"And yet, my child," her mother answered, "it is better for us all that it should be so. You are now getting strong enough to go to work in the fields, and this is impossible in your present attire. Nor can I go and leave you alone at home. It is necessary that we should exert ourselves more and more; for—" She paused, for what she was going to say would have been a reproach to her husband, and that she would not utter. But her tears expressed her meaning. Her daughter replied :

"It is not that I grudge toil, or shrink from being like what I in truth am, a poor peasant girl ; but I feel as though, on putting off this religious attire, I shall be exposing myself more completely to the dangers and temptations

of the world ; and, perhaps, losing some claim to that protection of the Queen of heaven, as whose child I have been till now brought up. But it is time, my dear mother, that I should tell you of an offering which I made on that night when, for the first time, *he* absented himself from home, and have often since repeated before the altar. There I have again and again prayed that I may never be allowed to put off my white garments, but may be allowed to bear them down into my grave unstained ; and farther——” she hesitated and faltered as she added, “ I have begged of God to take my life in exchange for my dear father’s conversion and return to virtue. I cannot help hoping that my prayer and offering have been accepted.”

Her mother was greatly troubled on hearing this, and hastily answered : “ Beware, my child, lest you tempt Heaven. May God hear your prayer on behalf of your poor father ; but not on that condition. Indeed,” she added, after a moment’s reflection, “ I do not

see what reason there can be to fear it ; for never, in spite of our sufferings, did you seem to me stronger or in better health."

It was now, notwithstanding, finally arranged between mother and daughter that on the morning of the anniversary of the vow, they should proceed very early to the church, so to enjoy a few hours' silent prayer by the light of the sacred lamp, which the child loved so much, before receiving communion in thanksgiving ; after which she would change her white dress for the ordinary peasant's cloak, and so return home. And these preliminaries arranged, and the priest's consent obtained, who was to leave the church door open for them, they both forbore to revert again to the subject. Only Marie seemed ever intent on it in her thoughts, while occupied in preparing the dress, in which she should make her last appearance as one consecrated to God, that its whiteness and purity might be perfect ; and the while weaving a garland of choicest flowers, as

her last offering, to crown the image of her Lady and Patroness.

But once again we must withdraw our reader's attention from the contemplation of the virtues of mother and daughter to trace the ruinous course of the unfortunate Pierrot, and see him plunged at last into the lowest abyss of guilt and degradation. The month was expired which had been agreed on before the commission of the crime promised to be his last. The day in fact was come on the night of which it had to be perpetrated, and still an impenetrable secrecy was preserved by all around him as to what it was to be. By this time everything worth moving in the houses of his two accomplices was packed up for instant flight, and mules were in readiness to carry their baggage and families over the frontiers. As to himself, he had not taken any measures either to fly or to secure himself against the pursuit of justice; not merely because he was in such ignorance about the crime that he knew not how he could

best shape his course, especially with his family on his hands, but also because he was almost reckless as to consequences, and hardly cared what the result might be. A prey to remorse, to shame and to bitter grief, he would have preferred a prison, the galleys, or the scaffold, to his present state; and forgot all consequences and all risks in the assurance that, after this one crime, he should be freed from his present thraldom. During that last day of their partnership in guilt, his companions strove to occupy his thoughts, and divert him from unpleasant anticipations by their wild discourse; and after their meal they plied him with strong drink, which, if it did not actually intoxicate him, dulled his faculties and heated his blood. He was ready for anything, and he seemed to have made up his mind for any crime, in a desperate mood of excitement, almost amounting to frenzy. And still he shuddered within himself at thinking that possibly murder might be demanded from him: no other wicked deed now

seemed to him terrible or impossible. And yet, when the proposed crime was unveiled to him, it was one as much beyond his thoughts as this, and appeared to him no less frightful ; and he shrank from it with a trembling horror that staggered his very companions.

It was not till late at night, when on the point of starting from the house, that the object of their expedition was revealed to Pierrot. It was no less than to plunder the church of Mont-Marie, to strip it of its silver and donatives, its rich altar-plate, the ornaments of its image and its tabernacle, and carry the whole over the frontiers into Spain. They had made all necessary arrangements for concealing or melting down their rich booty, so as to escape detection.

Had a thunderbolt struck the head of the unfortunate Pierrot, he could hardly have been more stunned than he was on hearing this. The moment he was a little recovered from his first amazement, he began to storm and protest that no

consideration on earth should ever prevail on him to commit so horrible and so ungrateful a sacrilege. • But his companions now knew their power, and dealt with him as a skilful angler does with a fish that feels the first smart of the hook ; they gave him play, and allowed him to vent his feelings ; and then, when he had exhausted his first burst of passion, began to draw him into the full gripe of their wicked might. For this purpose they represented to him that it was too late to draw back—for if he attempted it they would immediately fulfil their threats of delivering him up. They told him that it was mere folly to shrink from the commission of one crime more, which they had promised should be the last ; that if he ever repented, it would be as easy to repent of this as its predecessors ; if not, that he was fully lost by what he had already done, and could not make his case worse. Many other wicked arguments and persuasions they employed : and when at last all else had failed, they savagely threatened

to wreak their vengeance upon his family, and to proceed at once to murder his wife and daughter.

They had two motives for this cruel earnestness in wishing to have him as their accomplice. First, from his conversations they had ascertained that he knew accurately what was of real, and what of apparent, value among the ornaments of the church ; what was really of silver, and what only of baser metal ; as he had often assisted as voluntary sacristan there in his better days. They, on the contrary, had never taken more than a cursory glance at the riches accumulated in the sanctuary, enough to inflame their desires, but not to guide them in the selections of spoil. But, farther, they had a still baser and blacker mot've ; they had only valued Pierrot as a tool ; and having no further use for his active services after that night, it was their intention to make him serviceable as a victim by flying themselves and leaving him behind to be seized on by public justice, so as themselves to elude

its pursuit. His connection with them would, of course, be suspected, and the weakness of his character, which would make him at once own his guilt, would bring down upon him the vengeance of the law, which would then be less eager in its search after them. Such were the fiendish feelings of his companions for him ; such, in other words, is the friendship of the wicked !

The terrible menace of the ruffians was uttered with such rage, and yet in so determined a tone that, with Pierrot's experience of their character, he saw it was made in earnest, and would be unscrupulously carried into execution. His resolution failed him : the thought of all his past neglect and cruel abandonment of those whom in his secret heart he still loved, and actually reverenced, rushed upon him. Must he in the end prove their death—their murderer in some sort ? He could not bear to think it ; and in an agony of contending feelings, and with a protest to heaven, he chose what he thought the

lesser curse, and consented to accompany his tyrants.

Time urged, for they had lost much of the night in this contention ; but still it wanted some hours till day, and the robbers durst not now put off their enterprise. Silent and sullen they reached the church-door, and it was agreed that one should stay outside with the mule and keep watch while the leader with Pierrot should enter, and bring out the spoil.

They found the door unlocked ; but this did not surprise them, for no one in the neighborhood ever dreamt of the possibility of sacrilege. Cautiously and silently they opened it, and entered in, both paused upon the threshold, as if overawed ; even the hardened robber seemed afraid to advance. So deeply still and silent was that lonely sanctuary, that Pierrot could actually hear his heart beat against his side as it throbbed in remorse and fear. The flame of the lamp was burning bright and clear, and the entire holy place basked in its tem-

pered radiance. Never, in his days of virtue, had it looked to him more sacred, more venerable, or more lovely than it did on this night of his basest treachery ! Never did the silver and jewels of the altar beam more joyously, never did the saints from the walls look down upon him more softly, never did the image over the altar seem to gaze upon him with a sweeter, blander smile, than now that his mind was bent on sacrilege ! “ Ah, Judas ! ” they all seemed to say to him in words of soft reproof, “ wilt thou betray the spouse of the Son of man with a kiss ? ” He could not bear the sight, and he cast his eyes upon the ground ; and there he thought he saw his infant child, as she lay seven years before on the steps before him, slumbering once more the sleep of health, and himself kneeling in quiet gratitude beside her. Yes, everything around him looked to him now just as it did then—all except his own breast ; alas ! how changed was that ! He flung his vision, by a forcible effort, from his imagina-

tion, and raised his eyes, and in doing so encountered the steady gaze of the lamp, which shed all this beauty and mysterious charm on every object. What the eye of a man—"the light of his body"—is to his other features, even *that* did the pure solitary flame of the sanctuary's lamp appear to Pierrot's mind : it was His eye, through which it looked keenly, yet mildly, upon him, as if to see whether or no he would have heart to do his wicked deed. Whatever spell there is in the human eye to arrest the murderer's stroke or the savage beast's assault, that same power did this eye of the sanctuary exercise over his soul ; it charmed and fixed him immovable to the spot ; not all the promises or threats of earth would have influenced him to attempt a crime, so long as it beamed upon him. Nay, to his sight, it was a superhuman intelligence that darted from it : they were rays that penetrated into his bosom and pried into his heart that came towards him from it ; they had a voice that spoke, they had a point

that pierced, though tenderly. However the beams might play around objects beyond and around and linger on their way, to him they came direct and rigid and swift as arrows from a bow, cutting through the darkness between, and not enlightening it, but leaving it darkness still. Yes, it seemed to him as an angel's gaze ; the look of the heavenly watchman deputed to keep ward, and pay homage there, during the silent hours of night ; the guardian of the sacred treasure, but whose power was only to milden, to soften, but not to strike or to destroy. And even thus did that light more subdue him and make him a coward. Sooner would he have faced, it seemed to him, a seraph brandishing a sword of fire, or angels with scourges in their hands, than this noiseless and harmless protector of the sanctuary and its treasures. Is not grace about to triumph in him ?

This succession of thoughts and feelings in Pierrot's mind occupied in reality but a few moments ; but these were

quite enough to tire the patience of his companion, who, though clearly overawed, had not the same associations to work, nor the same heart to be worked on, as Pierrot. He soon broke in on the reverie which held him entranced, and shaking him by the arm, said in a whisper—yes, the ruffian durst not speak, in that light, in a higher tone :

“Come, come, comrade, we are losing time, let us begin.”

“I cannot,” said Pierrot, in the same voice, “I dare not.”

“Nonsense!” gruffly urged the robber ; “are you a child? Remember your promise. ‘To work, then, at once.’”

“I will not,” replied his poor victim. “Not for the world, will I rob her who here gave me back my daughter, on a night so like this.”

“And do you wish to murder her on such a night too?” growled the savage, with set teeth and the look of a tiger. “If you will not remember your promise, remember my threat. Ten minutes will

take us to your house, and five more will finish our work there. Refuse, and in a quarter of an hour you will be a childless widower."

Pierrot's heart quailed, his heart shuddered and quivered at the thought. The moment of grace was over; the demon had again triumphed, and in the recklessness of despair, he exclaimed:

"Be it so, then; let me accomplish my doom! To work; but not by this light: no, grant me this at least—not by this light."

"Why not?" asked the other. "Is it not enough?"

"Never mind," said Pierrot; "but not by this light. Let me be in total darkness, if you please, that would be better. But rather uncover your dark lantern, that will be best." And as he spoke he shaded his eyes with his hand, that he might not see the lamp.

The robber, muttering something to the effect that he too did not like that light much, uncovered his lantern. Its lurid red gleam streaming through the

coarse smoked glass appeared at once to contaminate the chaste light that before illuminated the holy place. It was like a stream of blood defiling, on a sudden, a crystal fountain; or the glare of a burning cottage breaking into the summer moonlight. Yet it was comforting to Pierrot, and seemed to dispel his fears. His companion saw it, and cheered him on, saying :

“ Come on, we must make up for lost time. I see you do not like that lamp. Ha ! ha ! we will get rid of it at once. It is silver, I have heard you say; so pull it down, and untie it, while I take down the candlesticks from the altar.”

Pierrot had just the same thought. So with desperate resolution, and still shrouding his eyes, he advanced to the lamp, pulled it violently down, and, with one powerful breath, extinguished it.

In the same instant, a shriek rent his ears, so sudden, so sharp, and so full of agony, that it did not seem to proceed from human utterance, but to come from

some being of another world. Whether it came from afar or from near, from the sky above or from the ground below, or from the country around, neither he nor his companion could tell. For it was instantaneous, and was neither prolonged nor repeated. But so immediately did it follow, or rather, accompany the extinction of the lamp, that both Pierrot and his companion naturally connected the two occurrences together, as cause and effect.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ITS REKINDLING.

“Accende lumen sensibus,  
Infunde amorem cordibus.”

“Restore Thy light to the fading sight,  
And Thy love impart to the fainting heart.\*  
*Hymn.*

“*Her lamp shall not be put out in the night.*”—*Prov. xxxi. 18.*

THE fearful cry which we described at the close of the last chapter struck terror into the breasts of the sacrilegious robbers. The ruffian leader shook with affright from head to foot, his teeth chattered, and the lantern fell from his trembling hand, and was extinguished. Both he and Pierrot rushed to the door and hurried out. There they found their companion equally terrified with themselves.

“Did you hear that?” they both exclaimed.

“Hear it?” said he, with a trembling voice. “Aye, and do not wish, nor intend, ever to hear it again. Let us be gone; I will have nothing more to do with robbing churches. I never liked the job much from the beginning.”

Both the robbers were now thoroughly alarmed, and fled as quickly as possible towards their homes, leaving Pierrot to shift for himself. His first impulse should have been to give thanks to God for his own escape from the actual commission of a dreadful crime, and for that of his wife and daughter from the vengeance of his brutal comrades. But fear, as yet, froze up every other and every better feeling, and he only thought of running away from the scene of his wickedness and finding shelter from the terrible cry which yet rung in his imagination. Instinctively he took the road towards home and hurried along it in the dark as quickly as his trembling

knees would allow him. His remorse gave him no peace, and he fancied himself pursued ; every howl of the wind in the deep ravine sounded to him as the voice of an angry multitude in chase of him, every waving branch and quivering bough looked to him as a sword or staff shaken over his head. Yet still, he durst not look behind him, still he halted not ; but on, on, he ran in breathless haste.

He came to the place we have before described, where a gentle slope led up from the wider road to the narrow path skirting the precipice. He ran up it in breathless haste ; the gray twilight was just beginning to appear, when by it he saw, standing on the narrow path before him, a wild-looking figure, whose hair and garments streamed to the wind, immovable as the rock that overhung it. He paused and staggered. The words of Scripture which had once terrified him in an eloquent preacher's mouth came to his thoughts : “Fiat via illorum tenebræ

et lubricum, et angelus Domini coartans eos.”\* He thought of Balaam stopped by an avenging angel in the narrow path. It seemed to him as if the same judgment had overtaken him in the most perilous pass. And yet the terror of what he had left behind him urged him on, and he determined, at all risks, to face any danger before him, so that he might reach his home. He rushed forward at once to the object of his terror, but still it moved not; he stood close to it, and it stirred not. He gazed upon it with mingled terror and anxiety—it was his wife!

There she stood, as if bereft of sense and speech, on the very brink of the precipice, looking intently down into its depth. She saw him not, she heeded him not; and even when he had grasped her arm and addressed her by her name, and told her who he was, she started not, and turned not towards him, but still

\* “May their way be dark and slippery, and an angel of God straightening them.”—Ps. xxxiv.

kept her eyes fixed in the same direction.

“Annette!” he exclaimed, almost distracted with this new sorrow, “what are you looking at? what is there below there, that so rivets your sight and mind?”

She replied not, but only pointed at a white object below.

“What is that?” he again asked; “a white stone? some sheep in the valley?”

“Yes,” she replied, and they were her first words; “our own lamb—Marie.”

“How?” cried out the wretched man; “what is she doing there?”

At these words her sense seemed to return to the unhappy mother, and, turning round and calmly confronting her husband, she said to him:

“Pierrot, you have no doubt forgotten that this night is the seventh anniversary of our dear child’s miraculous recovery. This morning we were going to our sanctuary to pray awhile in

silence by the dear light of its lamp, before she put off her white robes. She was tripping lightly and securely before me when suddenly we lost sight of the light from the lamp ; and she, naturally thinking (as I should have done had I been first) that it was time to turn, did so, and fell over the precipice. I gave but one shriek, and fell down senseless."

Pierrot felt as if a sword was driven through his heart. In a tone of agony he exclaimed : "I *have*, then, this night murdered my child ! it was I that put out the lamp !" and before his wife could stop him he had flung himself over the edge of the precipice, and seizing hold of the weak shrubs which grew from its clefts, he let himself down from crag to crag by a path which the most daring hunter would not have ventured to try. Fragments of rock crumbled under his feet and rolled down with a terrible roar, the bushes crackled and crashed as he tore through them, regardless of bruise or tear, and in a

few minutes he stood or rather knelt by the object at which his wife had pointed.

It was the body of his daughter, lying placid, as if asleep, in a soft brake. Not a limb was broken, not a feature discomposed, not a scratch or rent inflicted on her or her garments ; the very garland which she had borne as an offering was still in her hand, and her white cloak was gracefully gathered around her. The body of St. Catharine, carried by angels to mount Sinai, could not have been more gently laid down by their hands. For so light and brisk had been her step that she did not stumble or slip over the perilous edge, but flew over clear of its surface ; and life must have been extinct without pain long before she reached the ground below.

Pierrot knelt by her side for some time in deep anguish, but in earnest prayer ; then taking her in his arms as reverently as he would have handled a sacred relic, proceeded along the valley till he came to the same slope which he had ascended with very different feel-

ings a few moments before, and returned along the path to the place where he had left his wife. He found her still riveted, as if entranced, to the spot. When he brought his precious burden near her, she shed not a tear, she gave not way to a single expression of womanly grief ; her mind seemed absorbed in the consideration of what had occurred, which seemed to her something more mysterious than a mere accident or a human event.

She pressed her lips in deep devotion on the pale, but yet warm, brow of her child, and addressed her husband in these words :

“ Pierrot the words which you just now spoke are buried forever in the faithful bosom of your wife. But they have recalled to my mind the words of your prayer just seven years ago, when you begged for your child’s life, until some sacrilegious hand extinguished the lamp before the altar. Do you remember ? ” Pierrot’s frame quivered as he made a sign of assent. She contin-

ued : “ Then, your prayer was heard to the letter ; and *you* have no right to complain.

“ But she, too, hath prayed long and earnestly for two favors, and one at least has been granted. She had entreated not to be permitted to put off the white garments which consecrated her to God and His blessed Mother, but to be laid in them on her bier. I thought but a few hours ago that there was no danger of this being granted. But in the hearing of *your* prayer, hers has received its boon. She made another, too, but I know not yet its result.”

“ What was it ? ” eagerly asked Pierrot. She replied :

“ She offered up the life which she prized so little as a sacrifice to obtain your return to grace and virtue.”

“ Then she *has* been heard,” answered, with broken sobs, the unhappy Pierrot.

He had scarcely uttered these words, when a bright light darted to the eyes of both, as if a brilliant star had on a

sudden arisen. They looked around in amazement ; it was the light of the lamp rekindled in the sanctuary, and again shining as usual on that narrow and slippery path. Both hailed the omen, or rather the emblem and token of returning grace.

The good priest had been awakened by the cry that had startled the robbers, and had arisen to ascertain its cause. He went first to his chapel, and, to his astonishment, found it dark. It was some time before he procured a light, and he had in that moment relighted the lamp. On finding it drawn down, and still more on perceiving that the door was open, and discovering the lantern on the ground, he saw at once that he had had a narrow escape from sacrilege. How this had been prevented he could not conceive, and he remained examining every place, and pondering on the strange circumstances, when he perceived footsteps approaching. His alarm was changed into grief, when he saw that it was Pierrot and his wife,

the former bearing in his arms the dead body of his daughter.

It was long before his sympathizing sorrow allowed him to listen to the mother's tale of affliction. She told it at last, without mentioning her husband's name, except where she described him as madly rushing down the precipice to recover his child. But the good old man now saw his own and a no less beautiful solution of the mysteries of that night than that of the parents, as he said :

“ Now I understand it all. Not only has her wish been gratified, of never returning to a worldly garb, but she has proved the guardian and protecting spirit of this her favorite sanctuary, which she so much adorned. But for that fatal accident to her and the pang it caused her mother, the robbers, whoever they were, would have accomplished their work. For, no doubt, the cry which awoke me scared them. By her death she has saved this holy place from pillage. She was herself as a

second lamp of the sanctuary ; how natural that the putting out of one should cause the extinction of the other.”

Their plans were soon arranged. A bier was placed in the middle of the church, on the very spot where she loved to kneel, and covered with a black velvet pall. Upon it, facing the altar, the corpse was placed in its snow-white, spotless dress, the hands, with her crucifix placed between them and her beads twined around them, were joined on the breast ; her long silken tresses floated on her shoulders, and the wreath which she herself had twined was placed upon her head.

On either side knelt one of her now broken-hearted parents ; but Pierrot soon passed to the knees of the venerable pastor, where he poured forth with deep contrition and burning tears the history of his past crimes, and exchanged the stinging worm of a remorseful conscience for the tender consolation of loving repentance and assurance of

pardon by the absolution of Christ's minister.

He was again at his former post, kneeling by the body of his child. But now her spirit seemed to him to hover in the soft radiance above him, and to smile upon him in the rays of the sacred lamp. He could imagine it mingling with angelic choirs descending to rejoice over the sinner brought to repentance, and flitting around him hand in hand with that guardian spirit who had never abandoned him in all his wanderings. And as he looked, to assure himself of the reality of his state, to the bier beside him, it seemed to him as if a new smile played upon her features, and a tinge of life had returned to her countenance.

Morning was come, and the well-known death-bell sounded from the little turret of the chapel. The neighbors started at its voice, for they had heard of no illness near them, and crowded in kind anxiety to the sanctuary. They faltered, as they entered, in astonishment

and sorrow. The tale was soon whispered from one to another ; the flight of those naturally suspected of the attempted sacrilege confirmed all their conjectures, while Pierrot's being with his wife and daughter screened him from suspicion.

Many tears of unaffected sorrow graced that funeral, but shed more in sympathy for the survivors than from grief over her whom all now envied. Mothers held up their little ones to look upon that corpse ; and instead of shrinking from it in terror, they stretched out their arms to ask to embrace it.

There was long, in the little cemetery of Mont-Marie, a grave greener than all the rest, and decked each day by children's hands with the fairest flowers : and if you had asked any of the busy little laborers whose it was, he would have told you with wondering eyes that it was *Marie's*—as if no one else had ever been called there by that name.

After some years there were two other graves near the favorite spot ;

they were those of her parents, honored by all for virtue and venerable old age. Pierrot left it to be told after his death how his virtue and his happiness, his crimes, his punishment, his repentance, and his forgiveness, had been wonderfully connected with the Lamp of the Sanctuary.







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